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Advancing Knowledge

Natural Curiosity 2nd Edition
A Resource for Educators

The Importance of Indigenous
Perspectives in Children's
Environmental Inquiry

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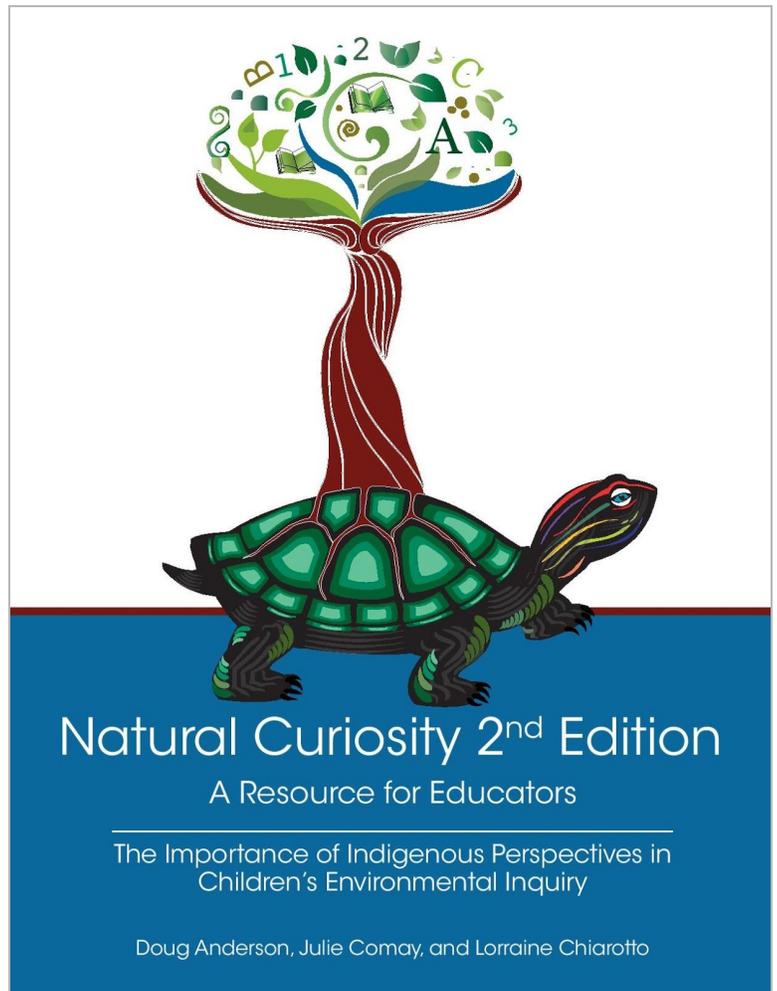
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“*Natural Curiosity* is a great gift not only to North American educators, but to people around the world. As this good book makes clear, the often-Eurocentric deconstruction of reality does not represent reality. The point of natural curiosity is not to study a thing, but to inquire into the connections and relationships of all things and spirit, seen and unseen. This book is an inspiration, a doorway into a web of life and truth.”

— **Richard Louv**, Author of “Last Child in the Woods” and “The Nature Principle”

“I must admit to having a case of Canadian envy, and the second edition of *Natural Curiosity* is a good example of why I feel this way. There aren't any education resources like *Natural Curiosity* in the United States. The wedding of theory and practice, the case studies of real live classroom curriculum, the vibrancy of childrens' and teachers' voices about their environmental work--it's compelling and exciting. And the integration of Indigenous perspectives as part of the warp of the fabric of environmental inquiry makes the whole endeavor deeply equitable and just. If I teach my Place-based Education course again, this book will play a leading role.”

— **David Sobel**, Senior Faculty, Education Department, Antioch University New England

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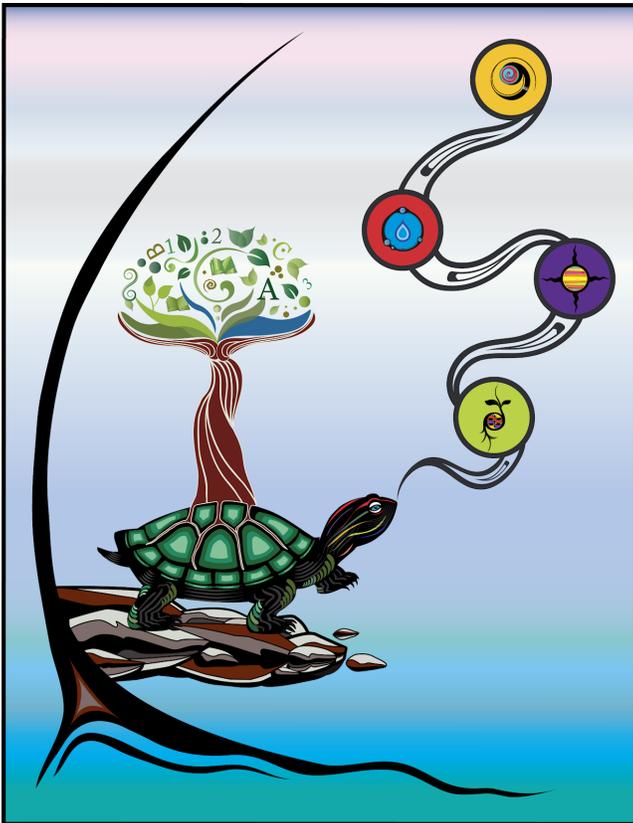
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Preface to the Second Edition: An Indigenous Lens on Natural Curiosity

The approach to environmental inquiry in both editions of the Natural Curiosity resource finds common ground with Indigenous values in some important ways, and reflects an emerging sense of respect for Indigenous knowledge among educators. One Anishinaabe Elder, Wahgeh Giizhigo Migizi Kwe (Eileen “Sam” Conroy), and retired elementary teacher said of the first edition, **“I cried when I read it. I said to myself, they’re finally starting to get it!”**

The second edition of Natural Curiosity supports a stronger basic awareness of Indigenous perspectives and their importance to environmental education. Over time such awareness can support better understanding of Indigenous knowledge through relationships with Indigenous people. This awareness and understanding can serve, in turn, as the basis for the application of Indigenous perspectives in modern learning contexts.

The Indigenous lens in this edition represents a cross-cultural encounter supporting what can become an ongoing dialogue and evolution of practice in environmental inquiry. Some important questions are raised that challenge us to think in very different ways about things as fundamental as the meaning of knowledge. We hope this lens inspires educators to explore learning in relation to these challenging questions.



“Reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians, from an Aboriginal perspective, also requires reconciliation with the natural world. If human beings resolve problems between themselves but continue to destroy the natural world, then reconciliation remains incomplete. This is a perspective that we as Commissioners have repeatedly heard: that reconciliation will never occur unless we are also reconciled with the earth.”

— In Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015)

If we begin to understand and appreciate Indigenous wisdom traditions, and work ethically with Indigenous people to bring those traditions to bear on how we learn, we can improve any education system. This edition provides some examples of how Indigenous perspectives confirm and deepen principles and the practices laid out in both editions of Natural Curiosity. We begin to ask: How do Indigenous perspectives relate to Environmental Education? How might they enhance educators’ understanding over time as they explore environmental inquiry? What Indigenous perspectives and principles apply to all of us, and can these be supported ethically in any learning environment?

These questions need to be approached with humility and a recognition that exploring them will take time and involve the development of meaningful relationships with Indigenous people. The Indigenous lens in this edition provides a glimpse of what such a process and relationship might mean. Exploring these perspectives in the classroom, in partnership with Indigenous communities and educators, should be the work of all educators.